NATIONAL
MARINE
PARKS

Feasability study on the creation of national marine park at the confluence of the Saguenay and the St.-Lawrence

REPORT

on information and exchange session

January and February 1987

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Environment Canada - Parks

(Ce document est disponible en français.)

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Table of contents

		Page
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Themes discussed in information and exchange sessions	6
3.	Findings	9
	A. Water quality	9
	B. Possible regulations	10
	C. Park boundaries	11
	D. Management and joint action	12
4.	General objectives of the Department	14
	A. Water quality	14
	B. Possible regulations	15
	C. Park boundaries	18
	D. Management and joint action	19
5.	Conclusion	21

The purpose of this document is to establish the context in which information and exchange sessions were held on the proposed creation of a national marine park at the confluence of the Saguenay and the St. Lawrence, and to present the themes discussed during these meetings, the findings arrived at through this exercise and the general objectives which the Department intends to adopt in accordance with these findings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mouth and fjord of the Saguenay, in surveys of Gulf of St. Lawrence marine resources conducted in the early 1980s, were found to have a number of the features required to be designated a national marine park.

In 1985, Environment Canada - Parks launched the initial phase of a feasibility study focussing on protection and development of the marine environment of the Saguenay and the St. Lawrence estuary. The aim of this study was to inventory and analyse the significant elements of the marine environment and to examine the possibilities and restrictions associated with the creation of a national marine park in this area.

The results of this initial phase proved positive enough for the Parks Service to initiate, in November 1986, the second phase of the feasibility study. A socio-economic study relating to the creation of a national marine park in the Saguenay, was initiated to describe the social, economic and tourist impacts of the creation of a national marine park.

At the same time, from January 26 to February 4 of this year, Environment Canada - Parks held information and exchange sessions on the proposed creation of a national marine park at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay. These meetings took place in the municipalities of Tadoussac, Grandes-Bergeronnes, Anse-Saint-Jean, Chicoutimi, La Baie, Saint-Siméon and Baie-Sainte-Catherine. The purpose of these meetings was to publicize the National Marine Parks Policy and communicate the results

of the initial phase of the feasibility study. The Department also sought to gather local comments and suggestions and identify local concerns for integration into the feasibility study.

Approach used

An "open house" format was used for information and exchange meetings. Department representatives used an information kiosk to support their presentation. This kiosk dealt with major general themes, such as national marine park objectives, marine ecosystems, oceanographic phenomena and the process for establishing national parks.

In order to properly inform local residents, a great deal of effort went into public information; an information package was systematically distributed to all participants at information and exchange sessions.

The media were contacted on several occasions (i.e., four articles written by the Department, two press releases and one advertisement inviting the public to attend meetings). Articles were published in continuous sequence until the end of the exercise.

In addition to these contacts with the press, the Department sent personal invitations to local groups involved in environmental and tourist activities. A circular inviting the population to participate in the meetings was distributed in the localities of Tadoussac, Grandes-Bergeronnes, Anse-Saint-Jean, Baie-Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Siméon.

From one meeting to the next, the public was encouraged to express its views about the proposed creation of a marine park in the area. Accordingly, flip charts were placed at the disposal of participants. The Parks Service also invited agencies and individuals to submit reports and/or complete and return the "remarks" form contained in the information package.

These meetings provided the Department with an opportunity to clarify certain aspects of the project and to gain a better understanding of local public concerns. From the citizens' standpoint, these sessions identified the implications of such a project.

Participation

Participation in the information and exchange sessions was strong; some 700 persons attended the meetings. The Parks Service collected approximately 110 comments written on flip charts and received 15 report submissions and 10 "remarks" forms. For analysis purposes, the Department collated all of the comments it received.

The following individuals and agencies submitted reports:

1. Mr. Jean Bergeron
   Revue Écho Logique
2. Le Club de pêche Sainte-Marguerite
3. Mrs. Leone Pippard
4. The Municipality of Saint-Fulgence
5. The City of Chicoutimi
6. The Syndicat de base de Charlevoix-Est (UPA)
7. The Conseil régional de l'environnement de la Sagamie
8. The Municipal Corporation of the Parish of Saint-Siméon
9. The Corporation touristique de Bergeronnes
10. The Chicoutimi Chamber of Commerce
11. The Conseil économique et social de la région de Charlevoix Inc.
12. The Municipality of Petit-Saguenay
13. The Société linnéenne du Québec
14. The Association touristique régionale de Charlevoix Inc.
15. The Comité d'environnement de Chicoutimi

2. THEMES DISCUSSED IN INFORMATION AND EXCHANGE SESSIONS

This section briefly examines the principal themes discussed in the information and exchange meetings. These comments were drawn from information on flip charts, in submitted reports and in comment forms. This list seeks to show the diversity of topics discussed in the initial contact with the population.

Topics of concern may be classified under 6 major headings, namely: park boundaries, pollution, possible regulations, the marine park concept, economic repercussions and development of the park, management and joint action. Each of these six themes also comprised a series of sub-issues which are listed below.

1. Marine park boundaries
   - Inclusion of Saint-Fulgence marshes
   - Interest of acquiring estuary islands
   - Interest of including littorals
   - Extension of tourist zone
   - Inclusion of Port-au-Saumon

2. Water quality
   - Saguenay pollution abatement
   - Control of industrial effluents
   - Snow dumping in watercourses
   - Toxic waste
   - Dredging regulations
   - Presence of a National Defense drop zone
   - Identification of pollution emission sources
   - Maritime disasters

3. Possible regulations following creation of the marine park
   - Maintenance of "white" fishing
   - Authorization of long-term fishing

- Controlling rather than banning duck hunting
- Guaranteed respect of fishing, access and hunting rights
- Involvement of other departments
- Seal hunt authorization (summer - winter)
- Boat traffic around wales
- Maintenance of farming activity

4. The marine park concept
   - Implications of the park for commercial carriers (cruise vessels)
   - Importance given to protection of birds
   - Interpretation techniques
   - Planned activities for interpretation, underwater observation, etc.
   - Development of alternative projects likely to achieve similar results
   - Observation of whales
   - Scientific research on snow geese and other species
   - Schedule for creation of the marine park
   - Acquisition of cottages along the Saguenay and the St. Lawrence

5. Economic repercussions and development of the park
   - Employment possibilities for residents
   - Job creation
   - Tourist impact of the project
   - Development of a major destination point at Cap de Bon-Désir
   - Project costs
   - Extension of tourist season

6. Management and joint action
   - Consultation of fishermen for management of the fishery
   - Continued dialogue between residents and the Department
   - Holding of education sessions on the marine park creation project
   - Formation of a regional advisory committee or a regional board of directors
   - Establishment of a regional roundtable.

3. FINDINGS

The various stated positions were collated to provide a general idea of the major concerns which local communities have about the proposed creation of a national marine park. Four of the themes listed previously are considered priority issues by the population, i.e., water quality, possible regulations, park boundaries, as well as park management and joint action.

Public comments about the project remain general at this point. Because the project is now in a preliminary stage, the Department described the major highlights of the project to the public, rather than specific information about the project components. Local communities therefore reacted by raising a number of questions about global issues.

In order to report as faithfully as possible the remarks of the various stakeholders, most of what follows is in the form of quotations from the reports, "remarks" forms or flip charts.

A. Water quality

Water quality issues clearly were given priority by all groups. The population wished to know the Department's position on this highly complex problem.

More specifically, interveners stated the following:

- "It is important that the Parks Service include in its marine park proposal clear and specific policy on pollution."
- "It is essential that Parks Service work to control and abate water pollution in the Saguenay and St. Lawrence in order to establish a true conservation zone at this location."
- "We deplore the fact that this marine park project does not involve pollution point sources."

- "The shortcomings of the feasibility study must be offset by:

  . identifying pollution emission sources (agricultural, industrial, forest and other);

  . conducting a prospective study of the status of inventoried resources, and developing various scenarios and future prospects in accordance with measures planned to correct the situation;

  . examining alternative projects liable to achieve similar results, as well as their cost over time."

- "Particular attention should be paid to all sources of industrial pollution, and efforts should be made to raise industry awarenewss."

- "The impact of pollution control on heavy industry should be assessed."

B. Possible regulations

A second major issue was the possible loss of hunting and fishing rights. In response to these questions, Parks Service representatives noted that, under the National Parks Policy, traditional, sport and commercial fishing are permitted in a marine park, but sport hunting, however, is prohibited.

Interveners disagreed with the Department's position on hunting, primarily with respect to the following points:

- "We feel that seal hunting and fishing activities should be permitted under certain conditions."

- "It would be preferable to control duck hunting and not prohibit it entirely; a complete ban would result in dissatisfaction."

- "We feel that, without changing existing hunting and fishing regulations or imposing further restrictions on these rights, the establishment of a national marine park in the Saguenay could only have positive and even desirable impacts on our environment."

- "We cannot understand how rights to hunt migratory birds, rabbit, partridge or other species, and to fish for cod, halibut, smelt or other species, as practiced by native peoples and by sport hunters and fishermen from throughout Quebec on an artisanal, non-commercial basis in the area of the proposed Saguenay national marine park could be entirely prohibited or even regulated differently than at present, since we simply cannot conceive that the above-mentioned species of fish, birds and mammals could become "endangered" with continued application of the current policy for the protection of these species, even if the marine park came into existence."

- "Establishment of the park must respect the Charlevoix region; it must be consistent with the development and environment of the region, not break away from local customs and practices (traditional and/or commercial fishing, migratory bird hunting) and take into account the aspirations of visitors (whales, belugas, tourists)."

C. Park boundaries

As part of the feasibility study, analysis of the inventory data made it possible to develop five scenarios of potential areas for the establishment of a marine park. These scenarios express a wide rande of possibilities, from the "minimum" area required to ensure the representativeness of the St. Lawrence estuary natural region and integrate the principal potentials therein, to an "extended" area which would include the significant components of each identified ecosystem. The majority of interveners opted for an "extended" area, while others proposed additions to this scenario.

This issue generated several comments expressed as follows:

- "To guarantee good attendance at the marine park, we feel it essential that the boundaries extend as far as the Port-au-Saumon area, the infrastructure and leaders of which would constitute a major asset and provide recognized expertise."

- "The natural element (fjord) underlying the creation of a marine park in our area will only be partially developed if the Saint-Fulgence estuary does not form an integral part of the extended area of the marine park."

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- "It would be advisable to define the potential area by including the entire fjord."

- "Creation of the marine park within the proposed boundaries, from La Baie to Les Escoumins, will "extend" the Lower Saguenay tourism zone to its true proportions by creating a common zone from the BEST district (Bergeronnes, Escoumins, Sacré-Coeur and Tadoussac) and the Lower Saguenay."

- "We recommend protecting as much as possible, thus considering scenario 4 to be a minimum."

D. Management and joint action

Interveners expressed their concerns about management of the national marine park and joint action. The various groups were very interested in active participation. Certain agencies formulated concrete proposals to that effect. The majority of agencies invoking this argument were groups of local associations. For example,

- "The Association touristique régionale de Charlevoix Inc. suggests the creation of a regional roundtable to facilitate Environment Canada - Parks actions."

- "The Société linnéenne is prepared, in accordance with its area of expertise, to participate in all phases necessary to delineate the boundaries and define the workings of the park."

- "To favour mutual respect and harmony between the parties, we feel (even though it is already too late in the process) that a regional joint committee on the marine park should be set up as quickly as possible."

- "Establish either a regional advisory committee with a participative management and joint action concept (according to a minimalist scenario) or a regional decision-making board of directors (according to the ideal scenario), both scenarios involving the participation of Parks Canada, municipal elected officials, a cooperating association of local socio-economic and environmental organizations and the Quebec government."

- "The Commission de développement des ressources touristiques du canton Bergeronnes [Bergeronnes township

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tourist resource development board] wishes to reaffirm the absolute necessity of associating local populations and their political, social and cultural structures closely with any marine park project, not only in the preliminary phase but throughout the establishment and development of the project.

This necessary participation by the public or its designated representatives in any marine park project must be coupled with the responsibility of governments to provide local residents with all available relevant information and with the technical and economic tools essential for their active participation."

4. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT

Analysis of the outcome of the information and exchange sessions led us to review the mandate of the feasibility study. All the comments, suggestions and recommendations gathered as part of this exercise were considered. For example, some of the topics discussed incited us to review components of the feasibility study and to plan specific actions in certain cases. The following paragraphs seek to clarify our general objectives regarding the priority issues identified in this participation program. These objectives are founded upon the National Marine Parks Policy.

A. Water quality

Like any marine area, the mouth of the Saguenay is sensitive to downstream effects. Located in the estuary of the most urbanized river corridor in Canada, this territory is exposed to the pollution discharged into the entire St. Lawrence basin.

The work of the St. Lawrence River Committee described the degree of contamination of this river in the mid-1970s. By order of importance, this committee's report classified environmental impacts on the St. Lawrence into six categories:

- dissemination of toxic substances;
- bacteriological contamination;
- encroachment on the territory of biological resources;
- destruction of esthetic values;
- abundance of suspended sediments;
- excessive nutrient enrichment.

The presence of a national marine park alone could not ensure water quality, given the many agencies which exercise and retain jurisdiction over the marine environment. In this regard, the Department of the

Environment would seek to negociate cooperative agreements with the provincial or territorial governments, other federal departments and agencies, as well as the governments of other countries in order to reduce harmful effects from outside.

Parks Service activities would focus on research into water quality as an indicator of the condition of the environment, and on the establishment of a permanent monitoring program and of a public awareness program. This contribution to the knowledge and evaluation of resource quality could lead to the establishment of an integrated water pollution program designed and administered by the administrations concerned.

A marine park in the Saguenay would be more of a catalyst capable of converging the efforts of the various players involved toward the stated objective of preserving park resources and making rational use of the environment.

B. Possible regulations

Several issues pertaining to possible regulations within the marine park were raised during this exercise. These may be grouped under various headings: hunting activities, access and navigation, fishing activities and cruises. The general objectives of the Department in this respect are set out in the National Marine Parks Policy.

Migratory bird hunting

Sport hunting is prohibited in principle in national marine parks under the Marine Parks Policy. In the light of the many comments and suggestions related to this activity, however, this issue is currently being reviewed in depth and the findings of the feasibility study will clarify the position of the Department on this issue.

Access and navigation

The right to "navigate freely" recognized in international law will be respected in national marine parks.

Commercial navigation and pleasure boating would thus be maintained. However, these activities could be regulated to protect resources, including marine mammals and the habitats vital to their survival. Regulations could also be made to ensure the safety of users and to avoid possible conflicts between commercial and recreational uses. It should be noted that Transport Canada will retain jurisdiction over navigation.

Fishing

Commercial and sport fishing activities would be permitted in national marine parks. Nevertheless, such activities would be managed in such a manner as to ensure that ecosystems are protected and viable populations of species are maintained.

Fisheries management would remain the responsibility of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. A park fisheries management plan would be negociated between Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and would be developed with the input of fishing industry representatives and the fishermen concerned before the park is created.

Fisheries management within national marine parks does not seek to disturb the commercial fishing activities or ways of life of persons who depend on the sea for their subsistence, but rather to support them and ensure the renewability of marine resources in order that the economic activities of such persons may be sustained.

As for seal hunting, licences to engage in this activity are issued by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Like fishing activities, seal hunting would eventually be dealt in the park fisheries management plan whose terms and conditions would be defined when the park is created.

Observation cruises

To promote and facilitate attendance at national marine parks, visitor services and facilities would be provided by Environment Canada or by the private sector in such a manner as to ensure the integrity of ecosystems. One Environment Canada objective is to encourage the participation of the private sector, including non-profit organizations, in the development and operation of visitor services and facilities. Accordingly, observation cruises would continue to be operated by the private sector in a national marine park.

C. National marine park boundaries

It should be noted, first of all, that the proposed boundaries for the national marine park in the Saguenay area are hypothetical, and that their primary purpose is to define an area for assessing the various factors of the feasibility study. Since such a study is a preliminary phase in the development of a proposal to create a national marine park, the delineation of boundaries is based primarily on an analysis of the biophysical characteristics of the marine environment in order to determine an area representative of the marine natural region of the St. Lawrence estuary. In this regard, the following main factors were evaluated:

1. characteristics of the marine natural region of the St. Lawrence estuary and the Saguenay fjord;

2. diversity, uniqueness and interest of natural themes;

3. integrity of ecosystems and the "naturalness" of the environment.

Other factors were also considered in order to set the boundaries for the feasibility study, such as existing administrative boundaries (regional county municipalities, municipal boundaries, provincial parks, etc.) and the management implications associated with the size of the area.

The area selected for the feasibility study is defined as the lower reach of the Saguenay, from a point below Cap de l'Est to a line bounding the eastern half of the St. Lawrence between Cap du Basque and Cap de Bon-Désir.

As part of the information and exchange exercise, several proposals were made, such as:

. extending the boundaries to Port-au-Saumon;
. including the Saint-Fulgence wetlands;
. further extending the recommended area; etc.

Specific and concrete proposals were also made by interveners for the development of sites on land (e.g., in Petit-Saguenay and at Cap de Bon-Désir).

All these elements are pertinent and must be taken into consideration. It is therefore recognized that the currently proposed boundaries are not definitive, and that they will in effect form the subject of a new review should the national marine park project go ahead.

D. Management and joint action

A national park cannot be created, developed or managed in isolation. Public participation is indeed vital in defining the vocation and objectives of a park and in developing the management plan. Accordingly,

Environment Canada - Parks supported the establishment of a public participation program. The comments, suggestions, concerns and recommendations of the public are to be gathered, analysed and integrated into the definition of a park's vocation and objectives or into the management plan. Public consultation takes place before the creation of a park and again when the management plan is prepared.

The National Marine Parks Policy provides for the establishment of an advisory committee on park management in order to maintain an ongoing dialogue with resource users and local residents. Local groups would consequently be involved in the park management decision making process. Terms and procedures for the operation of the advisory committee and the topics to be discussed by this committee will be defined when the national marine park proposal is formulated. No doubt, however, the development objectives, activity plans, and Parks/region relationship will be discussed within this committee.

The multiplicity of jurisdictions within a designated national marine park area also requires the participation of various departments and agencies according to their respective responsibilities. Within a broader context involving all concerned stakeholders, management decisions would thus be taken that would take into account all facets of the park's setting.

5. CONCLUSION

The open houses proved particularly fruitful in that they enabled Department representatives to inform the local population about the progress of the feasibility study, and also provided an opportunity for interested persons and groups to make known their concerns or suggestions, thereby allowing the Department to better define the local problems faced by the project. It became clear that local communities had similar goals relating to their participation, park management and local joint action. All were concerned, moreover, about water quality in the Saguenay.

This public participation program consequently enabled the Department to further integrate the feasibility study into its local context by more accurately identifying the problems associated with the creation, management and development of such a park in a given setting.

In concrete terms, several actions were undertaken by the Department to complete the feasibility study (e.g., reviewing joint action scenarios for water pollution control, evaluating various participative management models, identifying fishing activities and their impacts on park management, evaluating certain activities such as migratory bird hunting, defining local joint action needs, evaluating the uniqueness of the fjord and its mouth, etc.). These elements will be integrated into the feasibility study and will thus enable the Department of the Environment to make a more informed recommendation, in terms of the local context, on the feasibility of a national marine park, and possibly to undertake discussions in this direction with the Quebec government.

INFORMATION

Should you wish to learn more about the information and exchance sessions on the proposed creation of a national marine park at the confluence of the Saguenay and the St. Lawrence, please contact Rose-Aimée Bouchard, Public Participation Coordinator, Environment Canada - Parks, 3 Buade Street, Haute-Ville, Quebec City, Quebec,
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